

October 2003

Dear friends and neighbors,

It's property tax time again. If you are a senior citizen who may be struggling on a fixed income to pay your property taxes, let me ask you a question: Are you taking full advantage of the property tax breaks available to seniors?

As homeowners prepare to pay their taxes for the second half of this year (due Oct. 31), I'm reminded of the extraordinary burden property tax bills place on many low-income seniors. You've worked hard all your life to afford your own home... and then you are forced to pay higher, unaffordable taxes to the government as assessments skyrocket. It doesn't seem fair, does it?

I remain very concerned for homeowners whose taxes rise faster than their income. For this reason, I co-sponsored House Bill 1029, a measure that would further ease the property tax burden for senior citizens. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts to move this bill forward, House Majority Democrats refused to allow a vote on this important legislation.

In the past, however, the Legislature has adopted tax breaks for seniors. If you qualify and are not taking advantage of this tax relief, read on and I'll tell you how you can do so.

As always, I'm interested in hearing from you about this or any other issue regarding state government. You may call or write my office using the address/phone information listed below.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you!



State Representative • 2nd District

Roger Bush



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For more legislative news and information, please visit my website at: <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/bush.htm>

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**ARE YOU GETTING THE
PROPERTY TAX BREAKS
YOU DESERVE?**

State Representative
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P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**Important Property Tax
Information for Senior Citizens**

**ARE YOU
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State Representative
Roger Bush
2nd Legislative District

Serving the cities of: Carbonado,
Eatonville, Frederickson, Graham,
Orting, Rainier, Roy, Spanaway,
Yelm, and the Mt. Rainier area.





State Representative
Roger Bush
2nd Legislative District

Senior Citizen Property Tax Relief

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

Who qualifies?

The Legislature has expanded the number of seniors who qualify for property tax exemptions.

You may qualify for property tax exemptions if you meet all of the following criteria:

- You are at least 61 years of age or disabled.
- You own and live in a single-family home, mobile home, or condominium.
- You have a combined household income not exceeding \$30,000.

Expenses for some nursing or home health care and some medications may be deducted when calculating your income. You also can remain eligible for tax breaks if your home is rented while you're in the hospital or nursing home.

Valuation limit

Qualifying citizens are entitled to property tax exemptions on their principal residence and up to one acre of land. The value of the residence is frozen at its value on Jan. 1 of the year in which you first qualify for the program.

Exemption schedule

You are eligible for the following exemptions if your combined household income falls within the range indicated.

Income

Exemption

\$24,001 to \$30,000

All excess levies (*special school levies are an example of excess levies*).

\$18,001 to \$24,000

All excess levies and regular levies on the greater of \$40,000 or 35% of assessed valuation (*\$60,000 max.*).

\$18,000 or less

All excess levies and regular levies on the greater of \$50,000 or 60% of assessed valuation.

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRALS

If you are at least 60 years of age or retired because of physical disability — and your disposable income is \$34,000 or less — you may qualify for property tax deferrals. The state allows property tax deferrals on up to 80 percent of the equity in your home. The deferral program applies to your principal residence and up to five acres, if zoning requires a larger parcel size.

Under this program, you pay no property tax until the home is sold. The state pays the deferred taxes, and in exchange, receives a lien against the property equal to the amount of owed taxes plus 8 percent. Total taxes are collected when the property is sold or passed on.



REMODELING

People who remodel single-family homes can qualify for tax exemptions on the increased value of their property. Owners may claim tax exemptions on new additions of up to a third of the original value of their homes for three full years following remodeling. This exemption is available to all homeowners. **Be sure to contact the assessor's/treasurer's office before you finish your remodel project. Otherwise, you won't get the break.**

► **How to apply for property tax breaks**

For information on both property tax exemptions and deferrals, call your county assessor:

Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer (253) 798-6111

Thurston County Assessor (360) 786-5410

For more information about our state's property tax laws, call:

Washington State Department of Revenue ... 1-800-647-7706

MAKING MORE SENIORS ELIGIBLE FOR RELIEF

Reducing the property tax burden to keep housing affordable has been an on-going effort for me since I was elected to serve you in the Legislature.

This past year, I co-sponsored House Bill 1029 which contained several provisions for property tax relief including increasing the combined disposable income threshold which is used to determine who qualifies for property tax exemptions.



Although House Democrat leaders refused to allow this bill to move forward during the 2003 legislative session, it remains one of my priorities for the upcoming 2004 session in January. I believe we should continue to do everything possible to restore fairness and provide relief for all homeowners, especially those on limited incomes, so that young families can afford their first home and seniors can remain in their home for as long as they choose.

I appreciate hearing from you! Please contact me!

Rep. Roger Bush
(360) 786-7824